



Nebraska Early Childhood Education Grant Program

July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008

Annual Evaluation Report

Nebraska Early Childhood Education Grant Program 2007-2008 Program Year Evaluation Report

Historical Perspective

Legislative Bill 759, enacted in the 2001 Legislative Session, revised the Early Childhood Act originally passed in 1990 (79-1101 through 1104 R.R.S.). This legislation also increased the funding from \$560,000 to \$2,097,000 as part of Nebraska's early childhood initiative, *Children Can't Wait*. In 2005-2006, funding was increased to a total of \$3,680,000. The Nebraska Early Childhood Education Grant Program is administered by the Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood.

Purpose

The Nebraska Early Childhood Education (ECE) Grant Program is designed to award state funds to public schools or Educational Service Units (ESUs) to assist in the operation of comprehensive early childhood education programs intended to support the learning and development of children in the birth to kindergarten age range. The programs increase opportunities for at-risk children to participate in early childhood education programs by creating new, expanded and/or combined programs funded with school district funds, federal funds, and/or parent fees, and involve collaboration with Head Start and community early childhood programs. The purpose of the Nebraska ECE Grant Program is to provide high quality early childhood education program experiences that assist children to reach their full potential and increase the likelihood of their later success in school. Major emphases for the ECE grant programs include:

- Support for *inclusive, integrated programs/services* for categorically and economically diverse groups of children. The intent is to help communities move away from categorical to inclusive service delivery models.
- A strong *emphasis on family participation*, in recognition of the critical role of parents in assuring that children grow up in positive, supportive environments that encourage their early development and learning.
- Attention to *research-based elements of effective programs*. These include: teachers trained to work with young children; optimum adult/child ratios and group size; sufficient intensity and duration of programs; a curriculum based on knowledge about child growth and development, including an emphasis on age-appropriate language and early literacy experiences; and ongoing program improvement processes.

What was the purpose of the evaluation?

The purpose of the Nebraska ECE Grant Program evaluation was to provide:

- (a) descriptive information regarding the program, (b) descriptive child data, and
- (c) outcome data to assist in determining the extent to which the program achieved the anticipated outcomes. This was accomplished by collecting data across multiple sources and



forms using quantitative approaches. The evaluation plan describes the specific evaluation activities for each of the Nebraska ECE Grant Program objectives. The evaluation plan was implemented through the joint efforts of the NDE early childhood education program staff and program evaluation staff.

Evaluation Plan for the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Grant Programs

Objectives	Evaluation Outputs	Outcome Evaluation
<i>To provide a quality early childhood education program.</i>	Documentation of teacher qualifications. Evaluation of the quality of the program using the Environment Rating Scales. Documentation of program accreditation.	
<i>To assist children to reach their full potential and increase the likelihood of children's later success in school.</i>	Documentation of children's participation in ECE Grant Program. Documentation of the characteristics of the children who participate in the program. Descriptive analyses of family outcomes from a sample of the ECE grant programs.	Evaluation of children's (birth to 5 years) learning and developmental gains. Long term tracking of academic achievement of children who participated in ECE grant programs.

The following provides a description of the ECE Grant program and findings during the 2007 – 2008 year of implementation.

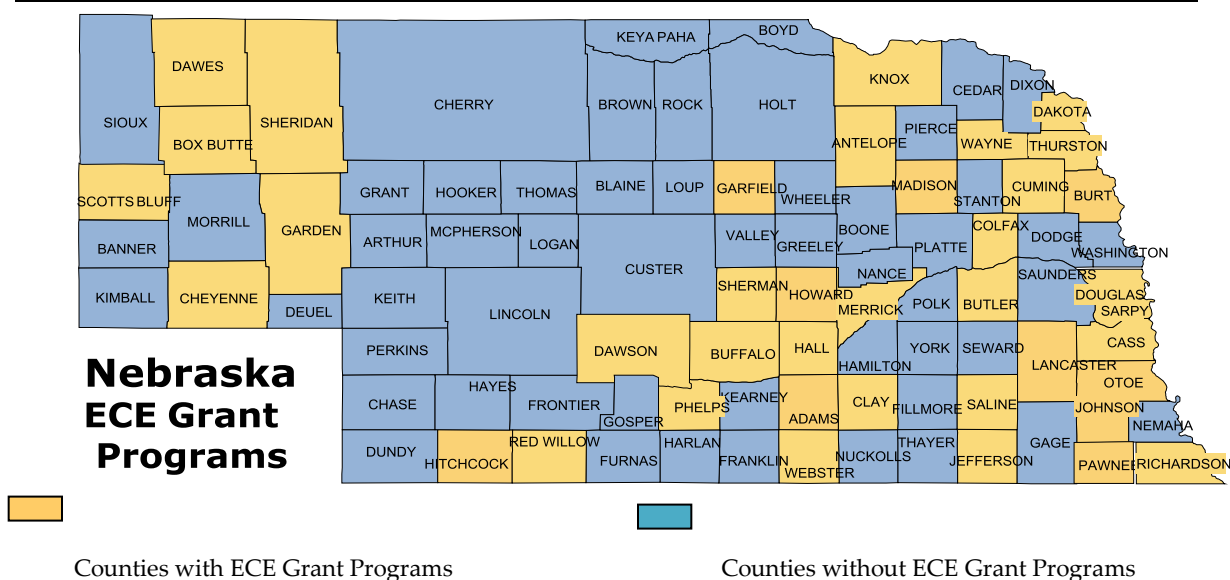
Where were the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Programs?

In the 2007-2008 program year, the Nebraska Department of Education provided Nebraska ECE Grant Program funds to 52 districts or Educational Service Units across the state to operate early childhood education (ECE) grant programs. Programs were funded by a combination of sources including: early childhood grant funds, Equalization Aid, and federal and local sources. Equalization Aid allowed NDE to fund twenty-one additional preschool classrooms in the 2007-2008 school year. Programs have been funded from one to sixteen years.



Listing of ECE Grant Programs

Alliance Public Schools	Bancroft-Rosalie Community Schools
Burwell Public Schools	Centura Public Schools
Central City Public Schools	Chadron Public Schools
Conestoga Public Schools	Creighton Public Schools
Crete Public Schools	David City Public Schools
Douglas County West Community Schools	Elgin Public Schools
ESU 9	Fairbury Public Schools
Falls City Public Schools	Garden County Schools
Gering Public Schools	Grand Island Public Schools
Hitchcock County Unified Schools	Holdrege Public Schools
Humboldt Table Rock Steinauer Schools	Johnson County Central Public Schools
Kearney Public Schools	Lexington Public Schools
Lincoln Public Schools	Loup City Public Schools
Lyons-Decatur Northeast Schools	McCook Public Schools
Millard Public Schools	Mitchell Public Schools
Morrill Public Schools	Newman Grove Public Schools
Norfolk Public Schools	Omaha Public Schools
Overton Public Schools	Palmyra Public Schools
Papillion LaVista Public Schools	Pawnee City Public Schools
Plattsmouth Community Schools	Santee Community Schools
Schuyler Public Schools	Sidney Public Schools
South Sioux City Community Schools	South Central Unified #5
Southeast Nebraska Consolidated Schools	Southwest Public Schools
St Paul Public Schools	Summer-Eddyville-Miller Schools
Umon’Hon’ Nation Public Schools	Wakefield Public School
Walthill Public Schools	York Public Schools



What was the Program Format?

ECE grant programs offered services either part day (less than 6 hours) or full day (6 hours or more). The majority offered half day sessions. A total of 91 classrooms provided part day and 24 classrooms provided full day programs. Part day programs offered an average of 15.4 hours per week and full day programs offered an average of 34.3 hours per week. The total hours per year for full-day programs ranged from 840 to 1480, with an average of 1252. Total hours per year for part-day programs ranged from 450 to 720, with an average of 535. Typical classroom size ranged from 16 to 20 children.

What were the Teacher Qualifications?

Rule 11 Regulations for Early Childhood Education Programs require that teachers have a Nebraska Teaching Certificate with an endorsement in early childhood education, early childhood special education, or early childhood education unified. The educational endorsements of the ECE grant program teachers are summarized below:

Total Teachers	Early Childhood Education	Preschool Disabilities/Early Childhood Special Education	Early Childhood Education Unified	Endorsement in More than One Category
# 101	65	11	14	11

Who were the Children Served?

The ECE grant programs were required to serve children in inclusive classrooms that represent the range of abilities and disabilities of the children and the social, linguistic, and economic diversity of the community. The ECE grant programs targeted prekindergarten-age children:

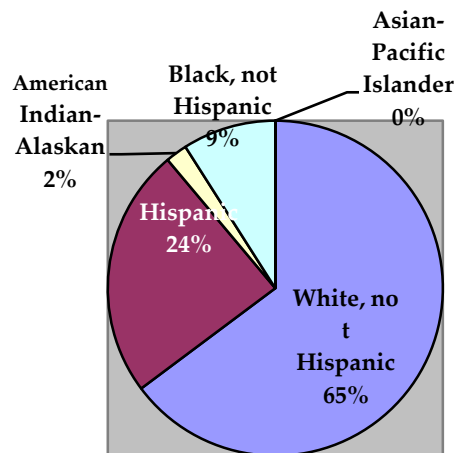
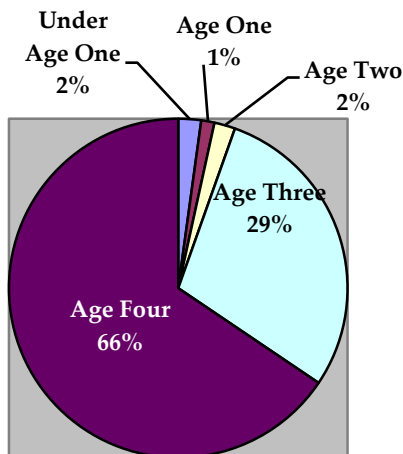
- 1) whose family income qualified them for participation in the federal free or reduced lunch program,
- 2) who reside in a home where a language other than English is used as the primary means of communication,
- 3) who were born prematurely or at low birth weight as verified by a physician, or
- 4) whose parents were younger than eighteen or who had not completed high school.

In 2007-08, a total of 2,299 children were served across the 52 state funded programs. This represented an increase of 681 children over the previous year. The single largest racial/ethnic group reported was White, not Hispanic (65%), followed by Hispanic (24%).

The ECE grant programs primarily served children from low-income families. A total of 77% of all children served were eligible for free or reduced lunch. More than half (55%) of all children served were in families whose income qualified them for free lunch. Many children (25%) had a primary home language other than English. The programs served a very small number of children (7%) who were premature or low birth weight. Some children (18%) had parents who were less than 18 years of age or were not high school graduates.



Report of Children Served – By Race/ Ethnicity



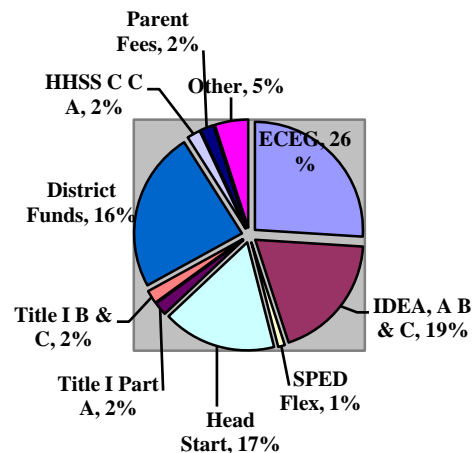
Funding for the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Grant Programs

Each program has funding from multiple sources. Additional funding included, but was not limited to: Head Start, Even Start, Special Education, local district funds, and parent fees. Programs continue to be eligible to receive state grant funds as long as the Legislature appropriates the funds and the programs continue to operate in accordance with the requirements of the Nebraska Department of Education.

Overall operational budgets totaled \$12,148,996 in the 2007-2008 program year. This amount included grant funds plus the contributions of the district and their partners. Nebraska ECE grant funding represented approximately 26% of the overall operational expenditures. The largest categories of funding included:

- Nebraska ECE Grant Program (26%),
- local district funds (16%),
- special education funds (19%), and Head Start (17%).

Distribution of Funding



Program Evaluation Findings

Results Matter in Nebraska is a child, family, and program outcomes measurement system designed and implemented to improve programs and supports for all young children birth to age five, served through school districts, Education Service Units (ESUs), the Early Development Network and community partners. This report will provide a summary of the evaluation of the Early Childhood Education Grant Program related to each of these *Results Matters* outcome areas.

Objective 1: To provide a quality early childhood education program

Quality early childhood education programs have been linked to immediate, positive developmental outcomes, as well as long-term positive academic performance (Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Bryant, & Clifford, 2000; Ramey & Ramey, 1998). Environment rating measures were used to evaluate the quality of the ECE grant programs.

Methodology

The quality of the ECE grant programs was measured using the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-R) (Harms, Cryer, & Clifford, 2006), or the Early Childhood Environment Ratings Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998) and the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) (Smith, Dickinson, Sangeorge & Anastasopoulos, 2002). The ITERS-R was used for classrooms serving infants and toddlers, the ECERS-R and the ELLCO were used for classrooms serving 3 and 4-year-old children. Data were obtained by completing the ECERS-R and the ELLCO on at least one sample classroom for each funded program. Very few infant and toddler programs were funded through the ECE Grant Program and, therefore, these data were not included in this report.

Observers were trained in the administration and scoring of the assessments through training conducted by the NDE. Observers must maintain reliability on the evaluation tools in order to assess the early childhood programs. If the classroom met the state required level of quality in Fall 2007, a spring observation was not required. If, however, the classroom was rated below the established quality standard, the program completed an improvement plan and a second observation was required in Spring 2008. Following each observation and classroom rating, a meeting between the observer and program staff was held. These meetings were used to discuss observations and to explain the scores earned by the program.

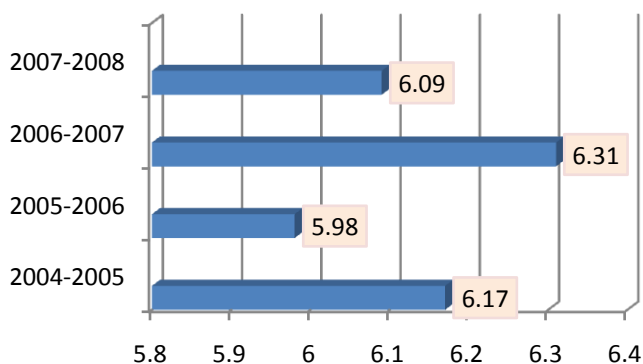
National accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) continued to be a major tool for assessing program quality and assuring that families have input into the design and operation of the program. A total of 17 programs are accredited by NAEYC.



Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R). The ECERS-R was used to evaluate the overall quality of the classrooms. The mean ratings across the 68 classrooms observed were 5 or higher on all sub-scores and overall. The highest scores across classrooms (average ratings of 6 or greater) included language-reasoning, interactions, program structure, and supports for parents and staff. All but one classroom observed met the state quality criteria of an overall rating of 5 or greater (on a scale from 1 to 7) by the end of the program year. This year the criterion to meet the standard of quality was increased so that a classroom must reach a score of 5 in each subsection. A total of 90% or 61 of the classrooms met this new standard.

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Cross Year Comparisons of ECERS-R Overall Program Scores



Classroom Observation (ELLCO). The ELLCO (Smith, Dickinson, Sangeorge, and Anastasopoulos, 2002) was used to measure the language and literacy practices of preschool classrooms across Nebraska. The ELLCO is composed of three interdependent research tools. The Literacy

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Environment Checklist (summarizes the organization and contents of the classroom); the Classroom Observation (gathers objective ratings of the language and literacy environment of the classroom); and the Literacy Activities Rating Scale (summarizes the information on the nature and duration of the observed literacy activities). To meet Nebraska's state required level of quality, a program must obtain a rating of 67% or higher on each of the three sections of the ELLCO. Over the past three years, there has been a gradual improvement of scores. The majority of the classrooms (97%) achieved a score above the set standard for the overall ELLCO rating.

**Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Scores
by Domain and Total Reported by Percent of Possible Score**

Year	<i>n</i>	Literacy Environment Checklist	General Classroom Observation	Literacy Activities Rating Scale	Total Score
2007-08	67	85%	91%	82%	88%
2006-07	51	82%	90%	80%	87%
2005-06	29	80%	88%	75%	81%

Summary of Objective 1: To provide a quality early childhood education program

External observers were used to collect measured classroom quality data, including broad classroom environment quality and specific focus on language and literacy supports. These data suggest that ECE program classrooms demonstrated quality environments for young children, including provision of rich language and literacy environments. To further strengthen supports for continuous improvement, programs were debriefed on the results and individual program summaries were developed by the external statewide evaluation team. These summaries provided comparisons of local program scores to statewide average program scores.

Objective 2: To assist children to reach their full potential and increase the likelihood of children's later success in school

Both short-term and long-term developmental outcomes were assessed to determine the extent that children's learning and development was positively associated with participation in the program. Programs used one of three state approved observational assessments to evaluate child progress: High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR) for Infants and Toddlers (2004) or Preschoolers (Brinkman, Barton, and Taylor, 2005), Assessment, Evaluation, Programming System (AEPS) (Bricker, 2003) or Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum (CCDC) (Dodge, et al, 2005). Since there were only a few programs serving infant and toddlers, the data will not be summarized in this report. Long-term data were collected from students who had participated in ECE grant programs and remained within the same school district. These analyses were based on math and reading scores on standardized achievement tests used by local school districts at 3rd or 4th, 8th and 11th grades and the STARS assessment at 4th, 8th and 11th grades.



Results Matter in Nebraska includes a child outcome system designed and implemented in 2006-2007 to improve programs and supports for all young children birth to age five, served by school districts, ESUs, the Early Development Network, and their partners. Although initiated as part of the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requirement for reporting child outcomes, Nebraska chose to include all state funded early childhood programs as part of this initiative. The results are summarized in the following section.

"What I like about the COR is that at parent teacher conferences, we can give the parents a family report so they can see all the things that we've been working on with their child"a Teacher from ESU #9

High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR). Progress data from the COR provided scores for children on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the most advanced. Twenty-six (26) programs provided data on children using the COR. A total of 952 children were served across the school year and had assessments completed both in the fall and spring. Twenty-five (25%) percent were children with an Individual Education Program (IEP). For evaluation of child outcomes, gain scores were reported for all domains of development (language/literacy, social relations, initiative, creative representation, movement/music, and math/logic). The COR ratings ranged from 1 to 5 on each domain. Gain was determined by the difference from fall to spring ratings. The following tables summarize results.

Initiative Skills			Social Relations		
Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain	Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain
State Summary n=952					
2.76	4.20	1.44	2.56	4.06	1.49
Creative Representation Skills			Movement and Music		
Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain	Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain
State Summary n=952					
2.49	3.93	1.44	2.64	4.22	1.58
Language/Literacy Skills			Mathematics and Science		
Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain	Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain
State Summary n=952					
2.29	3.81	1.52	2.13	3.85	1.72

Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum (CCDC). CCDC outcome data provided scores for children based on a sequence of four steps, with each step on the continuum representing a more difficult developmental concept. Twelve (12) programs provided fall and spring observational data for a total of 477 children. Twenty-one (21%) percent were children with an IEP. The CCDC ratings are based on a 6 point scale with a range from 0 to 5. The gain scores were reported across domains for children 3 to 5 years old. The tables below summarize the data including results based on the sub-population of gender and English Language Learners (ELL).

Social Emotional			Physical Development: Gross Motor		
Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain	Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Mean
State Summary n=477					
2.38	3.25	.87	2.80	3.51	.71
English Language Learners n=86			English Language Learners n=86		
2.31	3.14	.83	2.87	3.52	.66
Language			Cognitive		
Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain	Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain
State Summary n=477					
2.26	3.13	.87	2.23	3.14	.91
English Language Learners n=86					
2.04	2.88	.84	2.21	3.08	.87
Motor: Fine Motor					
Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain			
State Summary n=477					
2.71	3.52	.81			
English Language Learners n=86					
2.57	3.40	.84			

CCDC: Comparison of Males and Females

Social Emotional			Physical Development: Gross Motor		
Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain	Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Mean
Females=217					
2.37	3.32	.85	2.80	3.50	.70
Males=238					
2.24	3.15	.91	2.73	3.48	.75
Language			Cognitive		
Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain	Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain
Females n=217					
2.30	3.20	.90	2.36	3.21	.85
Males=238					
2.12	3.06	.94	2.12	3.04	.92
Motor: Fine Motor					
Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain			
Females n=217					
2.56	3.41	.86			
Males n=238					
2.30	3.20	.90			

The results indicated that preschoolers across ages made substantial gains in all areas, with slightly higher gains in cognitive skills. Analyses by gender and ELL status were completed across all developmental domains. Despite having higher gain scores than females, males scored lower (ranging from .14 to .17) in the spring. Additional analyses showed that English Language Learners (ELL) scored lower than non-ELL peers in the fall and spring except in the area of fine motor skills. The results also showed that ELL preschoolers had lower language skills. Except for the area of fine motor, the results showed that ELL preschoolers scored lower than their English speaking peers.

"Living in a remote rural area, the impact of the Early Childhood Grant upon our children has been 'huge'. For many children it is their first and only exposure to social/learning experiences."a Grant Administrator from Sumner-Eddyville-Miller Schools

Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System (AEPS). AEPS outcome data provided scores for children based on a sequence of items with increasing difficulty. Analysis was completed by calculating the AEPS ratings on a percent of items completed. Six (6) programs provided fall and spring observational data for a total of 59 children. As a result, this outcome data is reported differently from the CCDC or COR. The gain scores are based on the percent gained across time. The gain scores were reported across domains for children 3 to 5 years old and are summarized in the following table.

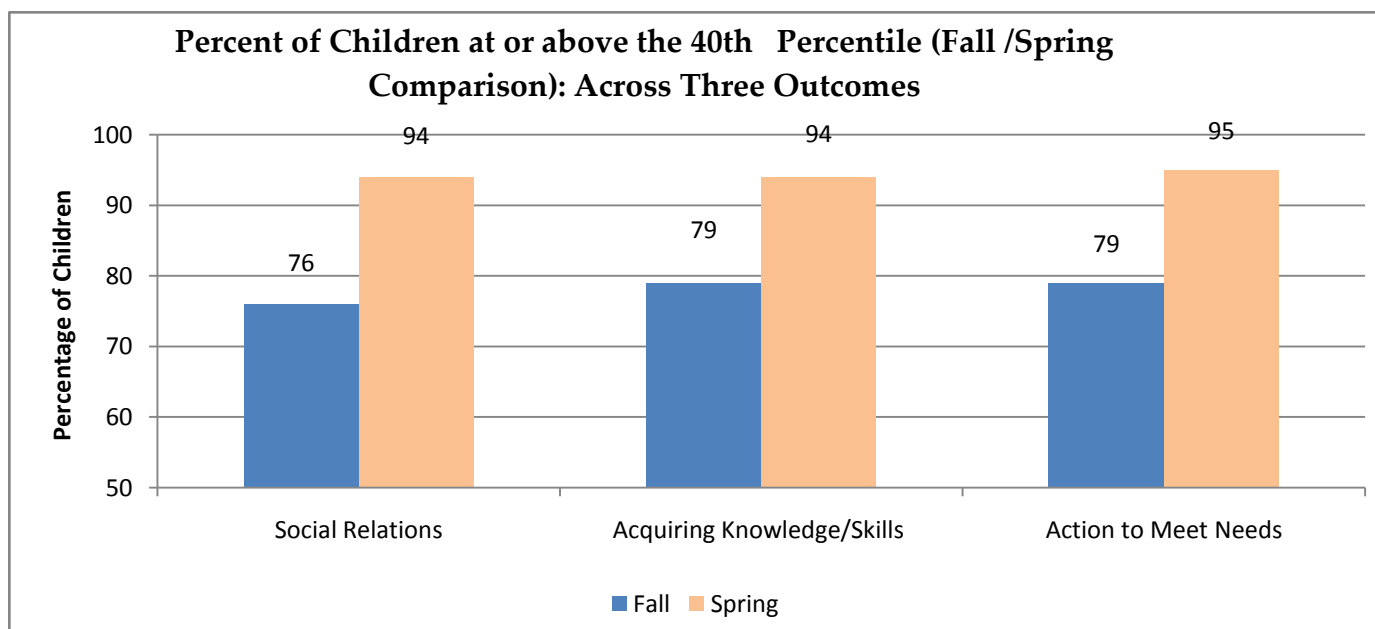
AEPS Preschool Findings

Social Communication			Physical Development: Gross Motor		
Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain	Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain
State Summary n=59					
80.44%	95.66%	15.22%	86.19%	93.72%	7.53%
Physical Development: Fine Motor			Cognitive		
Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain	Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain
State Summary n=59					
63.28%	95.42%	32.15%	51.18%	84.45%	33.27%
Social			Adaptive		
Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain	Fall Mean	Spring Mean	Total Gain
State Summary n=59					
74.92%	87.25%	12.33%	74.87%	89.90%	15.04%

The results found that children made the most gains in the area of fine motor and cognitive development, which were also the lowest areas assessed in the fall. By spring the highest level of achievement was in the areas of fine motor and social/communication skills and lowest achievement was in cognitive and social skills.

Analysis of the data for Results Matter is based on three functional outcomes:

Analysis of the data for Results Matter is based on three functional outcomes: 1) children have “positive social relationships”, 2) children “acquire and use knowledge and skills” including early language/communication, and 3) children take actions to meet their needs. Data was based on the results from CCDC assessment. (CCDC was the only online system who could provide this type of data analysis). Data was analyzed in three ways: a) the percentage of children at the 40th percentile; b) the percentage of children that stay at the same percentile ranking (which is considered typical progress); and c) the percentage of children in which there was more or less progress than typically expected. The 40th percentile and above represents children that were within the average range and have an approximate standard score of 95 (based on 100 as a mean). The figures below illustrate this data across outcome areas.



**A Summary of the Percentage of Children who Made Greater or Less than Expected Gains:
Measured by Change in Percentile Ranking**

Degree of Ranking Change	Outcome 1 Social Relationships	Outcome 2 Acquiring Knowledge and Skills	Outcome 3 Action to Meet Needs
+3 or more	5%	5%	3%
+2	5%	4%	5%
+1	13%	9%	11%
0	76%	81%	80%
-1	1%	1%	1%
-2	0%	0%	0%
-3 or more	0%	0%	0%

By spring, at least 94% of the children were scoring at the 40th percentile across all outcome areas. The majority (at least 76%) of the children maintained their percentile ranking, which suggested that they made adequate developmental gains to maintain the same level. Nineteen (19%) percent of the children increased at least one level, suggesting they made more than expected gains over time.

A Snapshot of the Short-Term Child Outcome Findings

The program made a difference for children

- Preschool age children made significant gains in all areas of learning and development.
 - Preschool age children made the highest gains in the area of math/cognitive development.
 - Children who were ELL scored lower than their English speaking peers and generally made slightly lower gains (.03-.05 difference).
 - In the spring, males made greater gains than females, but still scored lower than the females across all areas.
 - By spring, at least 94% of the children were scoring at or above average in all functional outcomes.
- significant gains in language/literacy and math/cognitive skills.

Preschool children made significant gains in language/literacy and math/cognitive skills.

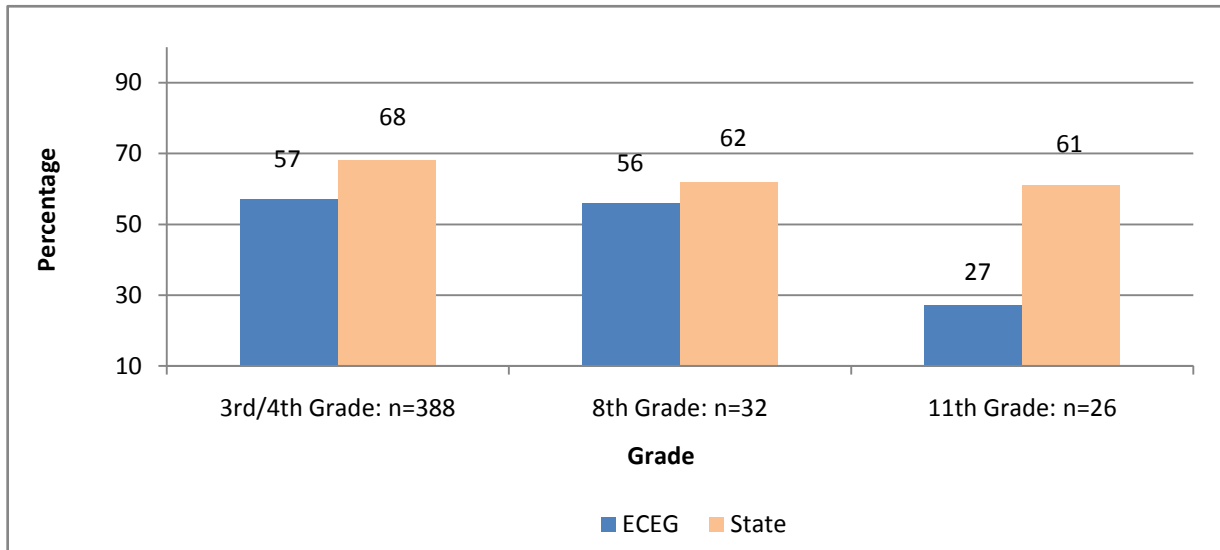
Long-Term Educational Outcomes

The Nebraska ECE Grant Program was designed to assist schools and educational service units in providing high quality programs that lead to positive long-term outcomes for young children, including continuing success in school. Long-term outcomes were tracked for children in programs that have been in operation sufficient years for follow-up and who remained in the same school district. One of the challenges of collecting data for long-term outcomes is the mobility of families. Mobility results in attrition of numbers of children remaining in the school district over time and the amount of children's data available for this report.

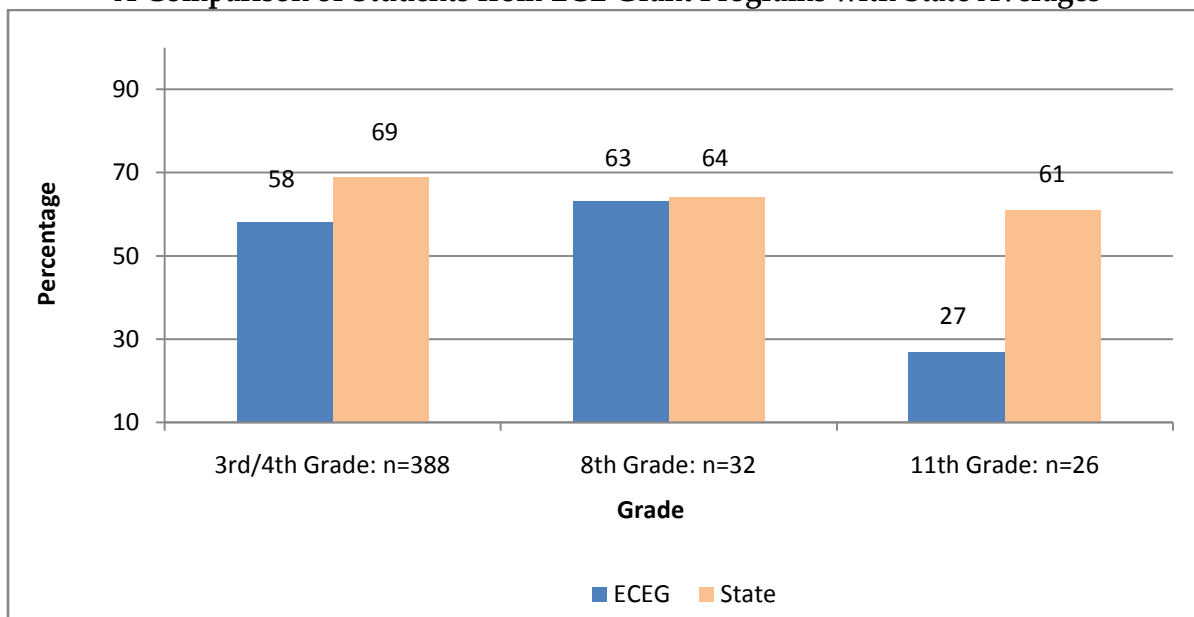
Based on the targeted population, which would be characterized as “at-risk”, the goal is to have the students achieve at academic levels comparable to or higher than their classroom peers. Therefore, those at or above the 50th percentile or those meeting or exceeding district objectives, would be considered equal to or above their peers.

Standardized Achievement Outcomes. The long-term impact of an ECE grant program experience was evaluated by collecting mathematics and reading achievement scores from a sample of students who attended Nebraska ECE grant programs. The assessments included the Stanford Achievement Test, Terra Nova, California Achievement Test, and Measures of Academic Progress. Results for 3rd or 4th, 8th, and 11th grade students were aggregated from 17 programs. Of the 446 students included in this sample, 17% were students with identified disabilities. The results are summarized in the following figures.

Summary of Percentage of Students Scoring Above the National Average in *Reading*: A Comparison of Students from ECE Grant Programs with State Averages



Summary of Percentage of Students Scoring Above the National Average in *Math*: A Comparison of Students from ECE Grant Programs with State Averages



The standardized achievement results indicate:

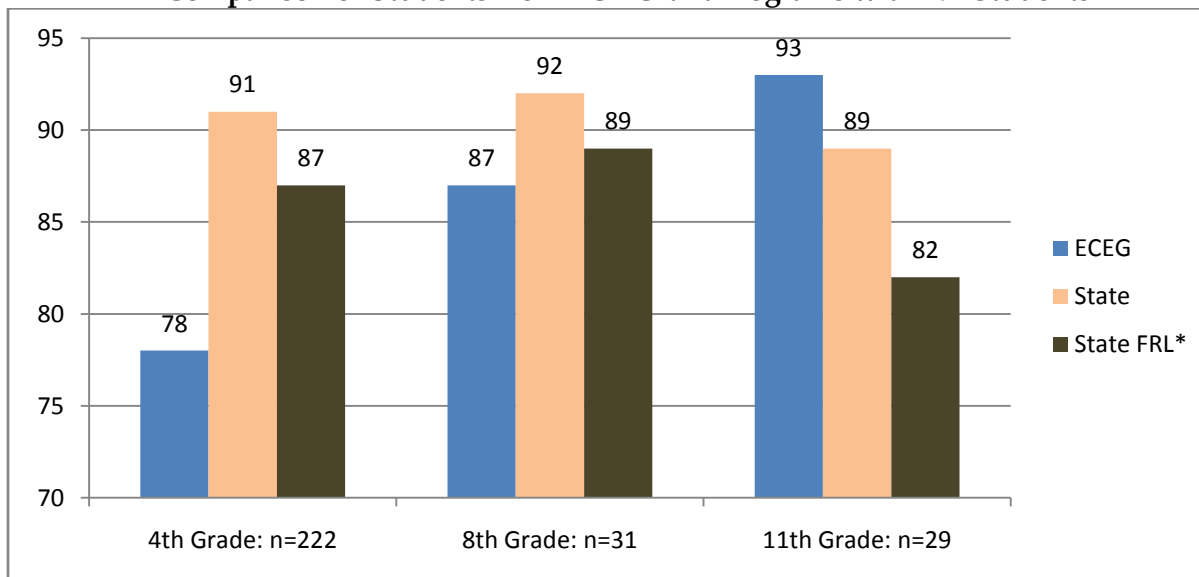
- The majority of the students from ECE grant programs scored above the national average (the 50th percentile or greater) on achievement tests in both 4th and 8th grade.
 - Students from ECE grant programs in 11th grade had the lowest percentage reaching the national average on both reading and math.
 - The ECE grant program had fewer students scoring above the national average than Nebraska students as a whole in both reading and math.
 - Students from ECE grant programs at 8th grade were comparable to their peers in math.
- The majority of ECE grant program students scored above the national average on achievement tests in both reading and math.

The majority of ECE grant students scored above the national average on achievement tests in reading and math.

Nebraska Student-Based, Teacher-Led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS) Outcomes.

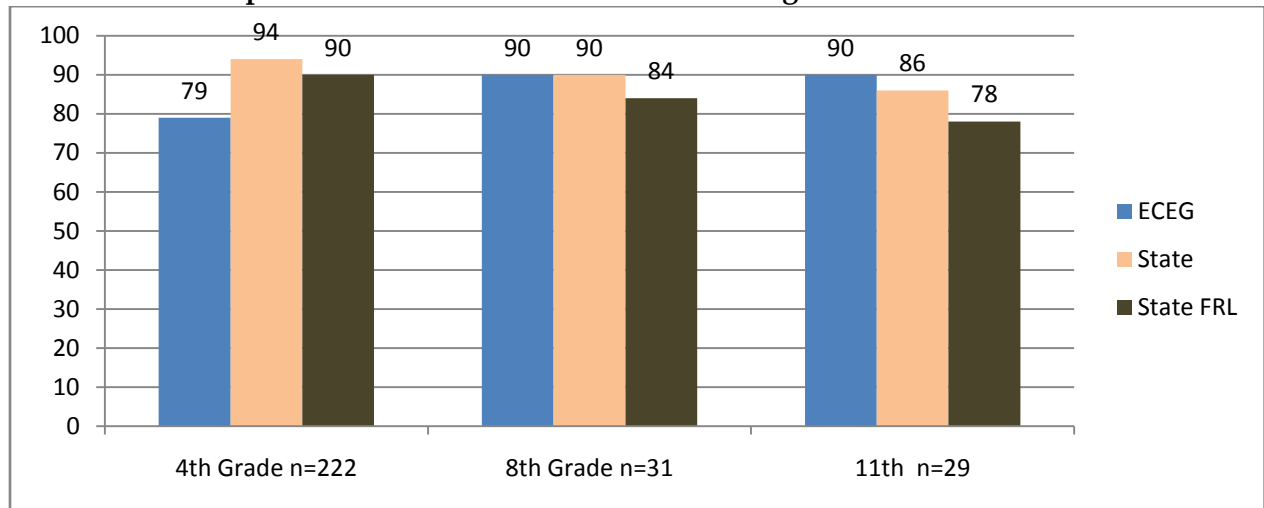
Fourteen (14) programs provided STARS outcome data for 282 students who participated in ECE grant programs. Twenty percent (20%) of the students were identified as receiving special education services. The majority of ECE grant students across grade levels met or exceeded district standards in reading, writing, and math. This trend was similar to the data reported from the standardized assessments with the exception of students in the 11th grade, who did better on STARS than the standardized assessment. The following figures compare the ECE grant programs student performance with the state results, including children receiving free and reduced lunch.

Summary of Percentage of Students that Met or Exceeded Standards in *Reading*: A Comparison of Students from ECE Grant Programs with NE Students

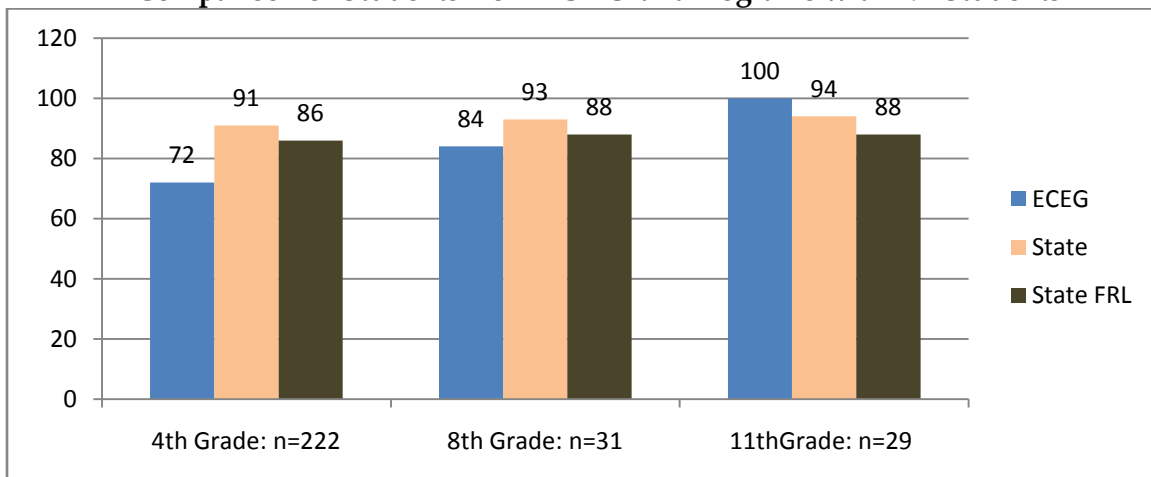


*State Free and Reduced Lunch

Students that Met or Exceeded Standards in *Math*:



Summary of Percentage of Students that Met or Exceeded Standards in *Writing*:



The STARS results indicate:

- The most discrepancy between students from ECE grant programs and the general population were in the area of reading for 4th and 8th grade students.
- In 4th grade, there was a greater discrepancy between students from ECE grant programs and the two other groups of children, with a lower percentage of students from grant programs meeting the standards.
- In math, the 8th grade students' scores were equivalent to all students and higher than students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL).
- Students from ECE grant programs in 11th grade achieved higher scores across all areas than the comparison groups of students.

Summary of Family Outcomes Survey: Spring 2008

Item	Statewide Pilot Average Score- All District Early Childhood Programs n=360	ECE Grant Program Overall Average Score: n=127	ECE Grant Program Average Score: Families who have children with Special Needs n=84	ECE Grant Program Average Score: Families who have Spanish as Primary Language n=47
Total Number of Families Responding:				
UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S STRENGTHS, ABILITIES and SPECIAL NEEDS	5.96	5.96	5.87	5.17
KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS AND ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD	4.81	5.05	4.98	4.53
HELPING YOUR CHILD DEVELOP AND LEARN	5.45	5.48	5.02	4.48
HAVING SUPPORT SYSTEMS	5.44	5.16	5.24	4.91
FEELINGS ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S PRESCHOOL PROGRAM	5.98	6.11	5.94	5.69
OVERALL AVERAGE	5.55	5.55	5.43	4.96

Scale is based on a 7 point Likert scale with 7=most positive descriptor



Summary of Evaluation Findings

In 2007-2008, the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Grant Program served a total of 2,299 young children and their families in 52 funded school districts or ESU programs. This reflected an increase of 681 children enrolled from the previous year. The majority of the children were four-year-olds from families that were eligible for free and/or reduced lunch.

Quality early childhood education environments are being provided through the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Grant Program. This is reflected in good to excellent average ratings across programs on the program evaluation measures, indicating a trend toward exemplary language and literacy practices.

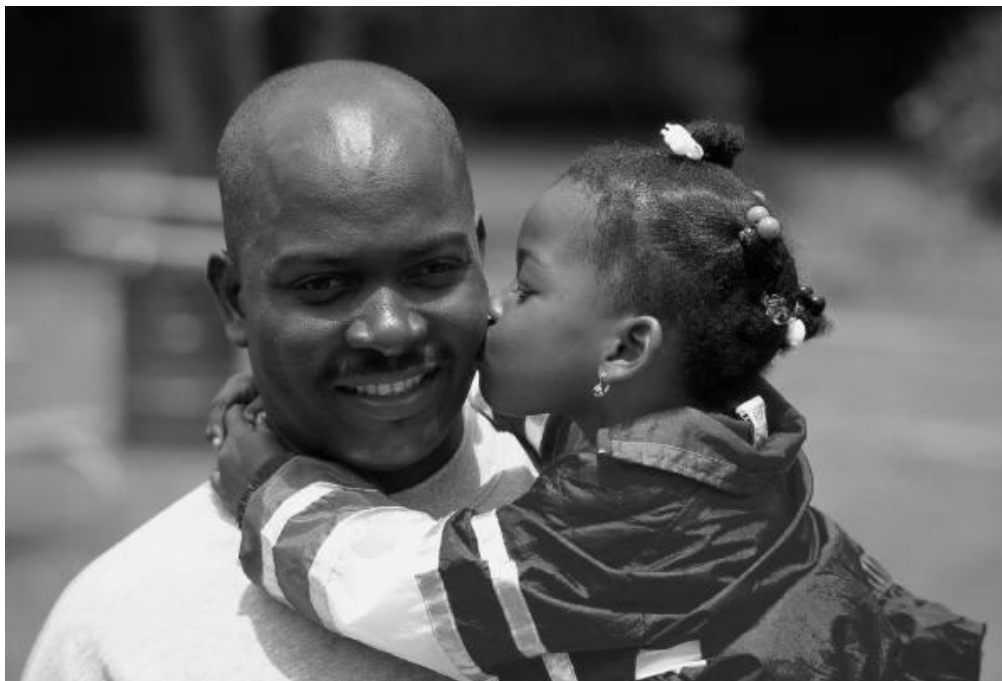
Participation in high quality experiences for young children resulted in immediate short-term benefits as reflected in the significant gains in development and learning outcomes, with many children making greater than expected progress. Positive long-term academic outcomes were demonstrated. Most ECE grant children were in the 50th percentile or greater on achievement tests. The majority met or exceeded district standards in reading, writing and math. When comparisons were made to Nebraska State Composite scores, 4th grade ECE grant children were below the state percentages for the total population or the students who were eligible for free and reduced lunch (FRL). In math, children who were served in the ECE grant program scored above both comparison groups of children in 8th and 11th grades.

Preliminary findings from the family outcome survey indicated that families had very high ratings. Parents rated their outcomes highest in understanding their child's strengths and helping their child learn. They also rated the quality of their programs high. Families whose primary language was Spanish rated all areas lower than other groups of parents.

The results of this evaluation clearly indicated that Nebraska’s investment in early childhood education grant programs yields positive outcomes for the young children served. Immediate short-term outcomes were realized as reflected in documented substantial learning and developmental gains. Longitudinal data suggested continued positive long-term outcomes as the children served in these programs experienced academic success, yet many continued to underperform their peers. The evidence demonstrated that despite documented success during the preschool years, children who had participated in the ECE grant program did not achieve at the same rate as peers, indicating that the ECE Grant Program was a successful step, but not the only step necessary for Nebraska to take to ensure all children meet their potential.

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